THE CHALLENGES AND STRUGGLES OF ELLs AND TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM:

STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THEM.

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Abstract

The increasing number of ELLs requires that the school systems have stages of teacher preparation for teaching ELLs. Different research has emphasized more robust teacher preparation programs as a solution to challenges related to the teaching and learning of these students. However, these programs are just part of the long way for teachers and ELLs to overcome all their challenges. Teaching ELLs represents a challenge for content teachers as ELLS portrait cultural and linguistic diversity in their classroom. For that reason, united efforts by content teachers, ESL teachers, administrators, parents, academics, local communities, and lawmakers are crucial. This thesis project aims to analyze the challenges that educators and ELLs face in the classroom in the US context. Also, findings from existing literature show the barriers teachers beard are social, institutional, academic, cultural, and linguistic. Thus, this paper provides strategies for content teachers to implement with their ELLs to involve them in their classes to become independent learners who can meet academic needs and acquire a second language with differentiated but inclusive instruction.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife and daughter who have encouraged and supported me throughout my graduation studies.

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I would like to thank Dr. Michelle Plaisance for guiding teachers during the development of the TESOL Master Degree program. Also, I like to thank Paula Wilder for her commitment and support throughout my studies and the thesis writing process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every change or move implies the capacity of accommodation into a new reality or environment; this process could be easy or challenging according to what we would face once we arrive there. For example, most of the English as a second language (ESL) students who come to this country are experiencing their first, significant, and new change in their lives; they left their countries because their parents are looking for a better future; they left behind their comfort zone and what was known for them. In the same way, when core teachers receive in their classroom, ESL students are required to have a new change in their classes; they have to accommodate/adapt their teaching to make sure the new students understand them, and there is reciprocal communication between them. Their challenge begins when the academic goals of the ESL students must be achieved, those core teachers are leaving behind their comfort zone and probably left behind what was known for them too.

I consider that core teachers must have enough preparation to help English learners in the classroom. Graduate teachers who know strategies for second language acquisition are more prepared to advocate for appropriate instructional accommodations to facilitate the engagement of English language learners (ELLs) (Daniel, 2008). In consequence, the primary purpose of my research project is to put into practice strategies, activities, ideas, and tools for the core teachers to be applied in their core classes with their ELLs to prepare lessons and to integrate activities that are academically appropriate for a wide range of students. Moreover, another goal of implementing those strategies is to help the teachers work effectively with students with different

native language and cultural backgrounds and know how to help them overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers they face in school and society.

With this research project, I am more involved in the school academic development; for me this is vital, because as Tupa and McFadden (2009) stated, rather than being a part of the web of instructional leadership described, ESL teachers and paraprofessionals are often marginalized from other teachers and excluded from discussing systemic decisions regarding their students. However, being an ESL teacher in two different scenarios in the United Stated, primary and middle school, I have seen and experimented with the core teachers' struggles with their ELLs, especially in middle school. These struggles are criticized as the academic performance and requirements are higher, which means having an excellent English language proficiency is imperative and vital, but unfortunately, the ELLs do not have it. For that reason, the way ESL are taught changes. Fullan (2001) mentioned that changes in actual practice along the three dimensions in materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs, in what people do and think are essential if the intended outcome is to be achieved.

Subsequently, Cummins (2001) argued that all teachers and administrators in schools must change their view of the languages and cultures of ELL: integrating students' language and culture into curriculum and instruction; accurately assessing ELL students, focusing on critical thinking skills in which students learn to question the world around them, and working to make a difference in their communities, and building relationships with parents of ELL students. With the guide, websites, activities, and strategies of this research project I provide to the core teachers, the way to help ELLs are to engage and remain in the classes. Therefore, ELLs find a safe and welcome environment in which their needs are seen and attended to in their classes. Additionally, due to my experience in middle school, I have witnessed how ESL students lack

motivation as they feel they are not part of the school community because of their native language, cultural background, and ethnicity.

Moreover, the tools I provide to the teachers allow them to explore resources with filters to make their teaching individualized for the ELLs' needs. Teaching collections by content area, grade level, and activities by language practice build background, clarify input, fortify input, foster interactions, develop academic language and assess language and learning. The resources I supply to the teachers generate motivation for ESL teaching and learning as the teachers and ELLs find new ways to deliver and receive the content they need to learn. In this way, this research provides the ELLs with motivation, which is indispensable for language learning. Chiew Fen Ng and Poh Kiat Ng (2015) pointed out the widely spread belief that motivation is a factor in language learning success. Also, considerable previous research possessing insight into language learner motivation includes the works of Dornyei (2001), Gardner (2006), and Deci and Ryan (1985). These authors' extensive research significantly enriched the field of motivation and enhanced a practical understanding of the link between motivational theory and the classroom.

To develop my research project, I have experienced firsthand the struggles the core teachers and ELLs face through reading, assembling, and collecting different academic articles, research, and educational websites to handle and find successful ways to overcome the grapples in the classrooms with the education of ELLs. The application of this research project is timely and appropriate as in recent years, we have seen a huge increase in English language minority students in schools, thus making our schools more ethnically and linguistically diverse than ever before (August & Shanahan, 2006). Thus, like Hammond and Zaretta (2015) stated, the commitment to be an effective educator of culturally diverse dependent learners builds the stamina and courage to persevere when the process gets challenging. It primes my brain and

activates my will, motivating me to make this project valuable for my school community, ELLs, teachers, administrators, and personal and professional achievement.

Chapter 2: Literary Review

English language learners in the United States are acquiring a new language and getting adapted to a new culture and a new reality that represents a new life. These students who are learning English along with a new lifestyle constitute many challenges for their teachers. Educators are meant to help these students to achieve their academic goals and needs. However, content area teachers sometimes do not have enough preparation to know exactly how to help ELLs. In addition, they are not always familiar with these students' cultural backgrounds, their lives, and the academic context they had before they arrived to the United States. Banks (2001) wrote that teachers must "develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural society" (p.5). Moreover, in his article, Banks (2001) stated that teachers must develop reflective intercultural processes to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Nevertheless, as most of the students in the content teachers' classroom are English native speakers and the class is time-limited, teachers often face difficulties in relating to and recalling all their students' cultures and diversity. Since ELLs are as important as the rest of the students in the school, content teachers have indicated that they want to find more effective ways to teach ELLs. Gunderson (2000) mentioned that many secondary teachers need to do more to help ELLs, noting that many teachers do not consider the teaching of reading skills to be their role. The fact that ESL learners are below the standard English proficiency level of the rest of the students makes it normal or acceptable that ELLs do not achieve their academic goals or

expectations, keeping them marginalized and at a lower academic achievement level and little chance for recognition.

Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Awareness

Brown (2007) defined culture as a way of life, as the context within which people exist, think, feel, and relate to others as the "glue" (p. 188) that binds groups of people together. Moreover, culture, as Brown (2007) suggested, can also be defined as the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a particular group of people in a given period of time. The United States is a country made and formed essentially for immigrants worldwide, with different cultures, traditions, religions, beliefs, etc. Fazel-Zarandi et al. (2016) in their analysis covered the years 1990 to 2016. They developed an estimate of the number of immigrants based on parameter values that tend to underestimate undocumented immigrant inflows and overstate outflows, their conservative estimate is 16.7 million for 2016, nearly fifty percent higher than the most prominent current estimate of 11.3 million, which is based on survey data and thus different sources and methods. The mean estimate based on their simulation analysis is 22.1 million, essentially double the current widely accepted estimate (Fazel-Zarandi et al., 2016). In this way, anyone could say that there is a great knowledge and awareness of how diverse people are, and that there is a respect and acceptance about those differences.

Hence content and ESL teachers who serve ELLs need to examine their own beliefs and knowledge about cross-cultural and intercultural sensitivity. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) pointed out that cultural awareness means becoming aware of members of another cultural group, including their behavior, expectations, perspectives, and values. Bennett (1993) proposed a model of Cross-Cultural and Intercultural sensitivity to provide a framework from which they can examine

these beliefs in a relatively non-threatening environment. This is the point of departure from which individuals can examine their own beliefs and attitudes. Pappamihiel (2007) stated in his investigation of attitudes and beliefs that the differences between cultures and how they can get along together is vital to achieve an armory between the ELLs and the rest of the students. It allows individuals to reflect on their own concepts of intercultural and cross-cultural sensitivity (Pappamihiel, 2007). Moreover, cultures do not insinuate that ELLs are bad people or any unknown species if they recognize themselves in any viewpoint. Therefore, the teachers and students can discuss and reflect on each aspect of multiculturalism without making value judgments about people who might hold views from any of the perspectives outlined by Bennett (1993).

Hammond (2015) asserted the problem of the achievement gap in terms of race, racial relations, issues of oppression, and equity, while ironically, the solutions for closing students' learning gaps in the classroom lie in tapping into their culture. The use of students' culture that teachers use in the classroom needs to be improved as it will help the why or how to close learning gaps that remains vague. Also, Hammond (2015) asked about why culture is related to the learning gap, and in the same way, he said that culturally responsive teachers need to be able to answer (p.21). If the students' background is used when starting a new lesson to engage them, for comprehension and problem solving, Hammond (2015) stated that the teachers need and appropriate background and knowledge of their ELLs' culture (p.29).

Building and creating that background allows the teachers to explore dimensions of culture to have intercultural and cross-cultural awareness aimed to create equitable education outcomes. Understanding culture and how it impacts ELL's teaching allows teachers to make information and knowledge they teach meaningful events that go to the students' schema

(Hammond, 2015, p.23). Moll (2005) defined the term schema as how one's culture, especially one's deep cultural roots as part of how the brain makes sense of the world and helps us function in our environment. In addition, schema helps us create background knowledge or what Moll (2005) called funds of knowledge, the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133).

Content-Based Instruction

ESL instruction has many facets while in countries like Colombia or Ecuador, its primary goal is to help ELLs to acquire the basics of the language, grammar, or syntax. ESL instruction in the United States has the purpose to help learners to be competitive at school with an English language proficiency that allows them to reach their academic goals. For that reason, Content-Based Instruction (CBI) has been found to be a practical approach to teaching English as a second language because with CBI, students can develop their language skills and gain access to new concepts through meaningful content. Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined CBI as the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught (p.204).

In this way, as CBI is the base in which ESL students receive instruction in the United States, ELLs and content teachers need the ability to focus on how information and meaning from meaningful content are utilized in discourse or texts, not in single sentences. Moreover, they learn how not to separate the skills or domains of the target language from each other. Yoon (2005) conducted a study that determined that students in CBI are supposed to read and take notes, listen, and write a summary, or respond orally to things they have read or written.

Additionally, grammar is considered a component of all language skills, not a separate one for language learning. Lastly, using language is always for a particular purpose, and an essential purpose of using language is to communicate meaning (Yoon, 2005).

ELLs must see the content they receive in the target language in their classes as something meaningful, comprehensible, with a purpose, and related to what they know or have seen before. Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that to give students comprehensible input for their purposes, teachers must ponder how they would communicate with students in the target language. Furthermore, content teachers must ensure their ELLs receive differentiated instruction to make it accessible for them. The ELLevation website is a platform in which ELLs and content teachers of most states in the country find different accommodations and modifications that can be used in their classes, quizzes, and state test to help ESL learners to receive individualized instruction based on their language needs. Stryker and Leaver (1993 as cited in Richards & Rodgers 2001) suggested that teachers use foreign talk or modifications to make the content more understandable. Those modifications include simplification of the language, well-formedness (e.g., using few deviations from standard usage), explicitness (e.g., speaking with nonreduced pronunciation), regularization (e.g., use of canonical word order), and redundancy (e.g., highlighting necessary materials through simultaneous use of several linguistic mechanisms) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001 p. 209).

Differentiated Instruction for ELLs

Differentiated Instruction is a relatively widely used instructional approach across instructional contexts. According to Tomlinson (2001), it has proven successful in the general education context where studies have found that students exposed to Differentiated Instruction

strategies consistently outperform other students. However, professional literature and academic research that offers directions with practical Differentiated Instruction strategies and tools for use in the ESL classroom still represent a gap. For that reason, Dahlman et al. (2008) suggested that content teachers need to ensure a high-quality curriculum that clearly articulates meaningful learning outcomes, both language, and content, without which differentiation is not possible. Moreover, to move onto carefully understanding student needs, their readiness, interests, and learning profiles, based on systematic pre- and formative assessment, and finally implementing effective Differentiated Instruction strategies in the classroom to maximize the learning of all students (Dahlman et al., 2008).

Creating an individualized lesson plan and activity for each student is not an attempt of Differentiated Instruction; nonetheless, differentiated instruction is a systematic way of maximizing learning that is both rigorous in addressing high standards for all students yet personalized to reflect individual learner characteristics and needs as Dahlman et al. (2008) stated. Differentiated Instruction allows teachers to decide how to teach based on the academic standards that determine what to teach. Tomlinson (2001) defined differentiated Instruction as "shaking up", because it goes on in the classroom so that students have multiple options for taking in information (differing learning styles and interests), making sense of ideas (varying cognitive processing needs, ranging from pacing to levels of abstraction), and expressing what they learn (multiple choices for assessment tasks) (p. 1).

Content teachers need to think about the essential content in their classes. Tomlinson (1999) explained that first, a teacher will need to make decisions about the principles and skills that all students will master while understanding students' needs and differences and providing opportunities for advanced learners to also work on more complex ideas or problems. Second,

essential concepts, vocabulary and ideas must be the lesson's focus, also how each learner will access them, how-to guide through those concepts and how they will be evaluated (Tomlinson, 1999).

Scherer (2006) mentioned that ELLs are often ignored and not given the opportunities to succeed in the tests because of their target language struggles and learning mindsets which represent assumptions, ideas, or notions held by ELLs. For that reason, Differentiated Instruction must go beyond the classes, and daily instruction as Scherer (2006) stated that assignments and tests ought to be more flexible, accessible, and understandable for all kind of students' population as it is allowed all the time in the adult world. People can apply to different jobs based on their aptitudes, learning, and personality preferences; some get into occupations requiring more practical and hands-on skills while others choose a career where they can use their creativity and problem-solving (Scherer, 2006).

Affective Filter

Affective factors are among the essential factors in second language acquisition (SLA) and English teaching. The learners' attitudes that affect the success of second language acquisition are considered Affective Filter as Ellis (1994) defined it. Learners' affective factors are obviously of crucial importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. Whereas learners'" beliefs about language learning are likely to be fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities on a day-by day and even moment-by-moment basis (Ellis, 1994, p. 483).

Dulay and Burt, in the earlies 1970's proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis and its influence on the foreign language learning process. However, Krashen (1982) put that theory

into five central hypotheses in second language acquisition (hereafter SLA): the Acquisition-learning distinction; the Natural order hypothesis; the Monitor hypothesis; the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen (1982) determined that affective factors function as a filter that reduces the amount of language input the learner can understand. For that reason, the content teachers need to be able to understand specific ESL learners' emotions, such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety to improve their second language acquisition.

ELLs are constantly under negative emotions caused by their total non-acceptance within the classroom, whether due to their native language, culture, or ethnic origins. In addition, when ELLs are frustrated because they do not understand the target language, this frustration often prevents efficient processing of the language input (Ellis, 1994). These negative emotions provoke a learning wall, and on the contrary, the positive emotions promote the efficiency of the process (Ellis, 1994). Ni (2012) mentioned that language learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety, have lower affective filters and can process more input. Moreover, learners with low motivation, little self-confidence, and a high level of anxiety have high filters and therefore obtain little input.

Arnold (2011) pointed out two reasons to explain the importance of understanding affective factors in second language learning. First, Arnold (2011) noted that attention to affective aspects can lead to more effective language learning, second, attention to affective aspects can contribute to whole-person development, which is beyond language teaching and even beyond what has traditionally been considered the academic realm. In this way, attempts should be made to lower the affective filter and let learners feel less stressed and more confident in a comfortable learning atmosphere, also, the crucial role that affective factors play in second language learning and teaching are essential (Ni, 2012)

Motivation in the classroom

Brown (2001) defined Motivation as the extent to which you make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit (p. 34). Moreover, Gardner (1985) explained motivation as a combination of effort plus desire to learn the language plus a favorable attitude towards learning the language. Motivation represents a challenge in ESL instruction in the United Stated as most of the ELLs are in this country because of their parents' decision; they left behind what they knew to face a new total beginning (Fazel-Zarandi et al., 2016). Therefore, ensuring an adequate acquisition of English learning requires the identification of what the Ells' motivations for foreign language learning are. Ramage (1990) pointed motivation out a prerequisite to developing interventions that promote interest and continuation in foreign language study (p. 189).

Many of the ESL students and their families are not aware of what the benefits of being bilingual or being educated in this country are (Ni, 2012). For that reason, it can be said that motivation has to be created from scratch. Williams and Burden (1997) proposed that motivation involves sustaining interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve specific goals. Consequently. ELLs need to see English as the vehicle to accomplish their academic goals and their life and labor ones in the future. If they are motivated, it directly and profoundly will influence how often students use foreign language learning (FLL) strategies; how much input they receive in the language being learned; how high their general proficiency level becomes; and how long they persevere and maintain FLL skills after language study is over (Oxford, 1992).

When ELLs arrive in the United States, their behaviors, life perspective, needs, and motivations may change. In this way, teachers need to make efforts to use the students' motivations to guide them in their English learning process because as Dörnyei (2001) stated, "Motivation is an abstract, hypothetical concept that we use to explain why people think and behave as they do" (p. 42). Dörnyei (2001) also claimed that motivation is "a basic aspect of the human mind," which includes contrasting both desires and rational thinking and a cultural identity (p. 56). In addition, Gardner (2006) built upon Deci, and Ryan's (1985) defined language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation as other types of motivation to consider in language learning. ESL learners need a classroom learning motivation first to achieve a language learning motivation; Garner (2006) detailed that classroom learning motivation is more erratic than language learning motivation as classroom learning motivation is chiefly based upon the environment of the classroom itself.

ESL instruction and learning may vary based on the county, state, or culture. For that reason, Krieger (n.d.) emphasized that the ESL and EFL environments are quite distinct and require different approaches and motivations. Krieger (n.d.) claimed that the main differences stem from four areas, one of which was the motivation level of students. Chen, Warden, and Chang (2005) mentioned that there is usually a difference in the type and degree of motivation between ESL learnings environments. In the United States, for example, ESL learners that are learning English do it because they must, as it is their new life and reality. However, the kind of motivation of students differs depending on the reasons that they want to learn English to come to the United States and will have different results (Chen et al., 2005). Thus, teachers can further motivate their students by giving them choices, helping them see uses for English in their daily lives, giving them reasonable challenges, and aligning the curriculum with their interests.

Safe and Inclusive Classroom Environment

Appropriate academic, social, and behavioral skills allow ELLs to become part of the class, the school, and the community. ESL education results are successful and adequate if it is based on an inclusive setting and if the classroom behavior is consistent with teachers' demands and academic expectations. Moreover, a safe classroom environment must promote the students' learning and socialization with peers within an environment of tolerance, respect, and acceptance. Content teacher's classroom management plans should be consistent with and include the services available in the schools to promote positive behavioral support systems in support of language acquisition (Leedy et al., 2004). ESL learners are involved in a new school system that represents challenges, paradigms, and fears. For that reason, a good classroom management system must recognize the close relationship between positive behavior and effective instruction as Baran-Lucarz (2014) stated.

ELLs need to see the school community as a family, a place where they can be safe, be themselves, and have an active identity. Baran-Lucarz (2014) stated that students' success in learning [a second language] depends on the extent to which [they] are willing to modify and accept a new identity (p. 453). Moreover, Sugai and Horner (2001) stated that ELLs' success is contingent upon this new identity being positive if there is collaboration and commitment of educators, students, and family and community members. Also agreed on unified expectations, rules, and procedures; use wrap-around school- and community-based services and interventions; create a caring, warm, and safe learning environment and community of support. Moreover, other important factors are understanding and addressing student diversity and offering a meaningful and interactive curriculum and a range of individualized instructional strategies. Additional factors also include, teaching social skills and self-control and evaluating the impact

of the system on students, educators, families, and the community and willingness to revise methodologies based on these data (Sugai & Horner, 2001).

A safe classroom environment and success of second language learning depend on the guidelines, rules, and procedures teachers establish in their classrooms. Additionally, Baran-Lucarz (2014) mentioned the importance of teacher pedagogical practices and behaviors (expectations or wait time); the intergroup climate (determined by intergroup attitudes and previously established group dynamics); and the situational factors (the social parameters of the communicative situation and the communicative task at hand) (p. 448).

Self-confidence in the classroom

Due to their lack of English proficiency level and the new life, social, and classroom environment where they are living, ELLs commonly face fears and challenges (Ni, 2012). They are unable or reluctant to express their ideas and opinions and often cannot utter a complete meaningful sentence in class even if they understand what the other students are talking about or what the lesson is about. Consequently, self-confidence is a crucial factor in English acquisition, which profoundly influences the learners' language performance. Brown (2001) phrased this factor as "I can do it" or self-esteem principle, i.e., a learner believes in his or her own ability to accomplish the task. "The eventual success that learners attain in a task is at least partially a factor of their belief that they indeed are fully capable of accomplishing the task" (Brown, 2001, p. 23).

Ni (2012) mentioned some reasons why self-confidence for language learning results vital. Ni (2012) also noted that self-confidence will encourage a person to try new learning, the learners would be willing to take some risks to be successful. Moreover, the Ni (2012) stated that

a confident person rarely gives up; the person tries to do the best no matter the difficulties and uses them as stairs and trampolines to advance Ni (2012) mentioned that with these abilities, a confident student can succeed in language learning. However, self-confidence has profound and meaningful implications for language and content teachers, and they need to help students establish and strengthen their self-confidence when they learn the second language. In addition, teachers need to promote and establish an environmental space where learners' values and positive attitudes are promoted (Brown, 2001).

Gaining self-confidence in ESL learning goes beyond the classroom; the need to bridge the gap between school, course content, and the real world is crucial for achieving second language acquisition. However, classwork alone is insufficient for successful second language learning. For instance, Taylor (1983), Chisman and Crandall (2007), Dudley (2007), Rossiter et al., (2010) argued for the need for ESL instructors and institutions to help students take control of their learning by bridging the gap between the classroom and English use in the real world. For that reason, guiding the students in using English for their daily life, inside and outside the classroom and with their families as an instrument of success empowers students to build self-confidence by using English in meaningful ways. In addition, Buckingham (2009) argued for using the classroom as a steppingstone to facilitate out-of-class experiences in a comfortable atmosphere to practice the target language and build students' confidence and motivation.

Conclusion

Content teachers require alternatives, options, and help to find the best ways to meet the academic needs of the diverse range of learners who struggle with English. While it is crucial to articulate standards and skills for ELLs and content teachers, it is equally critical to consider how

best to provide content teachers with a packet of strategies to work with English language learners since they are increasingly likely to have such students in their class. In addition, ESL students need inclusive and differentiated instruction. They must be provided appropriate English language development support services and be assessed annually until they meet their academic goals and a state's criteria for proficiency in English on specific language tests to no longer be considered English language learners.

Moreover, content teachers require re-examining their methodologies, classroom strategies, and training. While reflecting on their teaching, content teachers will understand their possible teaching weaknesses and boost their teaching strengths. Furthermore, content teachers must know face ESL learners' instruction whit effective methods and strategies to be used for particular topics to meet the academic needs of the ESL population. Thus, given the importance of language development for academic success, it results imperative that all ELLs' classroom teachers have a packet of strategies that help them to understand the principles and best practices to support their ESL students' unique needs.

Chapter 3: Project Design

This chapter will explain the crucial need for the content area teachers who serve ELLs in their classes to have a packet with a series of strategies to help ESL learners acquire a second language. This packet will assist content area teachers to include in their lesson plans activities and strategies that allow ELLs to be engaged in the classes considering their English language proficiency levels. According to Samson and Collins (2012), "Currently, at the various stages of teacher preparation, certification, and evaluation, there is insufficient information on what teachers should know about teaching ELLs" (p. 8). For that reason, the primary need to create this packet of strategies arises in the lack of preparation and information that most of the content area teachers have about the teaching that ESL students must be delivered based on their language needs. Moreover, Samson and Collins (2012) stated that many teachers of ELLs are increasingly concerned about being held accountable for their students' progress as measured by standardized tests. Clearly, teachers of ELL students need the appropriate training to meet their students' language and learning needs and facilitate academic growth, yet most teachers lack this training (p. 8).

Currently, more than one out of four of all children in the United States are from immigrant families, and in most cases, these children speak a language other than English at home (Samson & Collins, 2012, p. 4). For that reason, the increasing number of immigrant students that are potentially ESL students requires that the school systems have various stages of teacher preparation, certification, and evaluation so that teachers know about teaching ELLs. In this way, by providing the packet of strategies I will give to the content teachers, they will have a

guide to emphasize the ELLs' development of oral language skills and to draw explicit attention to the type of language and its use in the classroom and social settings, which is essential to first and second language learning to achieve their academic goals. Moreover, content teachers will know and understand the role of culture in language development and academic achievement. Furthermore, with the strategies provided to the teachers, they will seek to meet the need of incorporating and integrating different kinds of knowledge, building up a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire, and adapting to learner's diversity as these aspects are imperative to teacher preparation that can be challenging to teacher- trainees (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernandez 2018).

ELLs in the United States come from diverse backgrounds (Futrell et al., 2003; Gándara et al., 2005; Kindler, 2002; Perez & Holmes, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Many ELLs are immigrants or children of immigrants and are disadvantaged in terms of their educational attainment, economic situation, and social security, compared to the students in the United States (Camarota, 2004). Furthermore, most ESL students do not come to the United States because of their motivation, but also because their parents seek a better future. Consequently, this immigration process implies that students bring to the classroom a "variety of cultural backgrounds, language proficiencies, academic experiences, and cognitive processes" (Perez & Holmes 2010, p. 41).

Consequently, reflection and reflective teaching are widely used in teacher education as these are viewed to be beneficial for both pre-service teachers and experienced teachers (Ditchburn, 2015; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Hence, teachers need to observe, examine, evaluate, and think critically about what happens in the classroom to act with foresight planning and be up to date with their instructional planning that actively includes and engages the ESL

population. In this way, my main goal is to help content teachers with strategies to involve their ELLs in their daily classes to become independent learners who can meet their academic needs and acquire a second language with differentiated but inclusive instruction. Moreover, the help of the school administrators and families is required as teachers and students should be expected to accept, explore, and understand different perspectives and be prepared as citizens of a multicultural and global society (Samson & Collins, 2012, p.10).

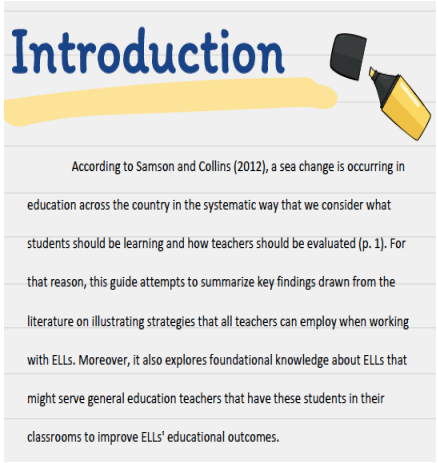
Additionally, the strategies have a purpose to motivate the content teachers and ESL learners to assume English teaching and learning as something meaningful. Fernandez-Deocampo (2020) stated that motivation is a complex issue that can be challenging for teachers to fully understand, generating challenges to engage students in the classroom, especially the ESL students' population. In this way, the pack of strategies contains crucial aspects such as the teacher's specific teaching and attitude elements; the course's specific materials and methods elements; and the student/group's specific motivational and engaging elements. Through this packet of strategies, content teachers can develop lesson plans and classroom activities that include ELLs as active and dynamic learners. In addition, I firmly believe that with this packet of strategies, all teachers would benefit from a more detailed understanding of the assessment, curricula, and instructional methods that would meet the unique needs of ELLs. Finally, as Samson and Collins (2012) mentioned, teacher preparation and development should require some basic knowledge relevant to ELLs for all teachers as a first step in helping ELLs to realize more significant academic gains (p.22).

Chapter 4: The Project

The product of this project includes a guide with a sort of strategies, websites, useful tips and activities aimed to help content teachers in their daily teaching to the ELLs with the struggles and challenges they face in the classroom. This guide seeks to be a resource that provides alternatives for content teachers and ELLs to assume that English learning could be accessible no matter cultural and linguistic differences.

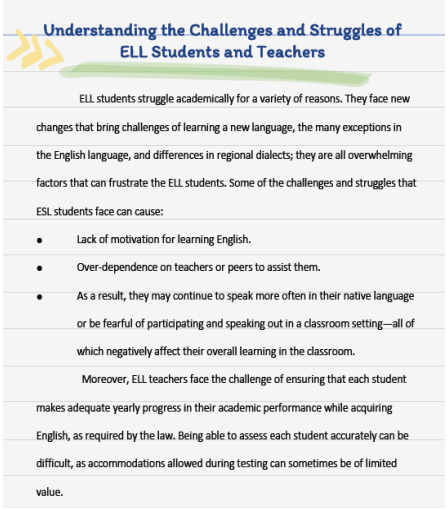
Introduction

The audience will find an introduction to the guide, with some guidelines to understand what the issues that the challenges and struggles that content teachers and ELLs students face in the classroom could cause. Also, it is mentioned the importance of the appropriate teacher's preparation for successfully teaching ELLs.


Introduction

According to Samson and Collins (2012), a sea change is occurring in education across the country in the systematic way that we consider what students should be learning and how teachers should be evaluated (p. 1). For that reason, this guide attempts to summarize key findings drawn from the literature on illustrating strategies that all teachers can employ when working with ELLs. Moreover, it also explores foundational knowledge about ELLs that might serve general education teachers that have these students in their classrooms to improve ELLs' educational outcomes.

Figure 4.1: Introduction.



Understanding the Challenges and Struggles of ELL Students and Teachers

ELL students struggle academically for a variety of reasons. They face new changes that bring challenges of learning a new language, the many exceptions in the English language, and differences in regional dialects; they are all overwhelming factors that can frustrate the ELL students. Some of the challenges and struggles that ESL students face can cause:

- Lack of motivation for learning English.
- Over-dependence on teachers or peers to assist them.
- As a result, they may continue to speak more often in their native language or be fearful of participating and speaking out in a classroom setting—all of which negatively affect their overall learning in the classroom.

Moreover, ELL teachers face the challenge of ensuring that each student makes adequate yearly progress in their academic performance while acquiring English, as required by the law. Being able to assess each student accurately can be difficult, as accommodations allowed during testing can sometimes be of limited value.

Figure 4.2: Understanding the Challenges and Struggles of ELL Students and Teachers.

Once the content teachers have read the introduction sections, they will see an opening for the strategies and activities they will have in this guide.

Figure 4.3: Opening for the strategies/activities.

Strategy 1: Connect with your students.

Content teachers will be able to understand how difficult and challenging could be a student to be in a new and different classroom/school with people that they don/t know and a language they don't speak. In this way, teachers will see some recommendations they could follow to connect with their students and have a good classroom relationship.

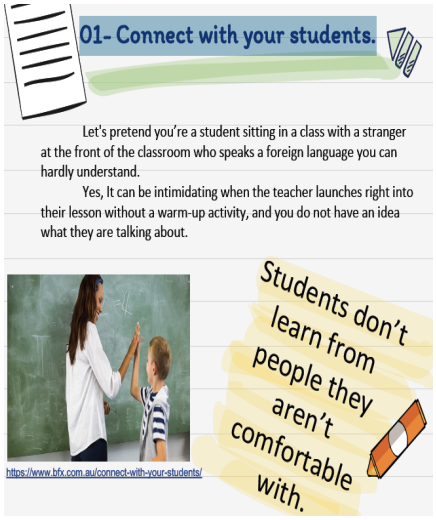


Figure 4.4: Connect with your students.

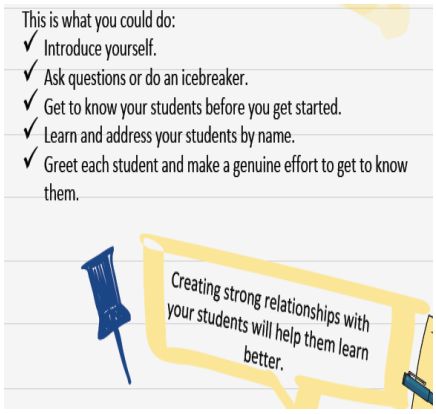


Figure 4.5: Some recommendations.

Including games and challenges in the classroom will be always a good idea to engage your students and connect with them. For that reason, teachers will have the opportunity to explore a website where they can find ESL games for English classed. (Beginner & Intermediate).

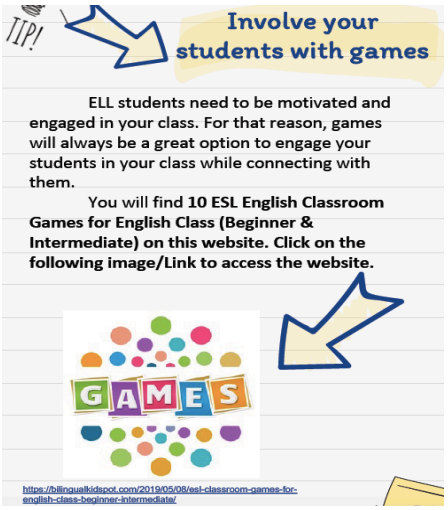


Figure 4.6: Involve your students with games.

Strategy 2: Allow some time for adjustment.

This strategy will provide the teachers with useful tips to understand the process that the ELLs are facing in their new classroom and life environment. Moreover, by applying this strategy, content teachers will be able to be in the position of the ELLs by listening to them and understanding their expectations.

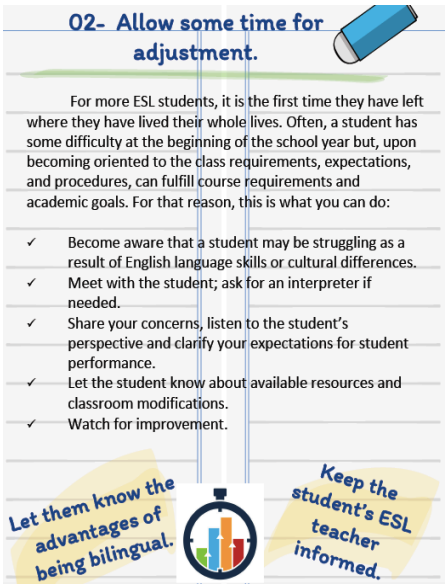


Figure 4.7: Allow some time for adjustment.

Strategy 3: Learn about your students' cultural background.

In this strategy, content teachers that are looking for successful ways to integrate cultural awareness and help to create a more culturally responsive classroom will find some activities, tips and a website to develop cultural awareness while having ELLs engaged and having fun.

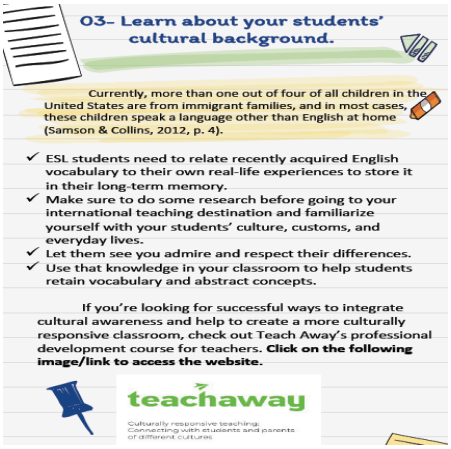


Figure 4.8: Learn about your students' cultural background.

Figure 4.9: Make culture diversity as something fun.

Strategy 4: Create a safe and comfortable learning environment.

ELL students need to feel safe and secure to express themselves fully, to show what they know and who they are. By creating a positive and learning environment, both physically and emotionally, where everyone is accepted and has the same opportunities, students will be more willing to try new things. Moreover, ESL students will be open to practicing their English language.

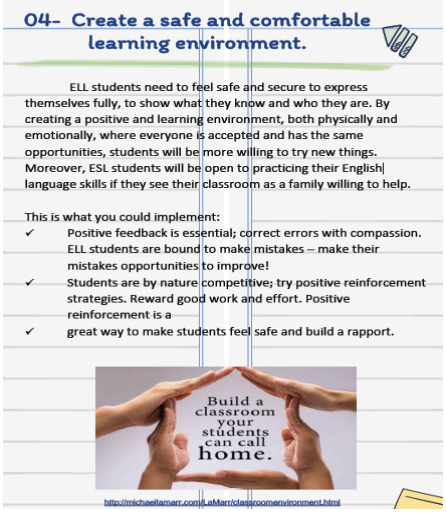


Figure 4.10: Create a safe and comfortable learning environment.

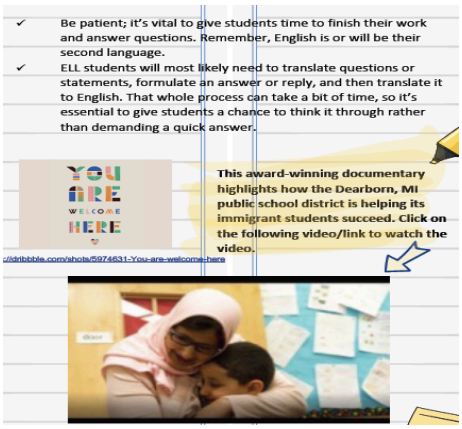


Figure 4.11: You are welcome here.

Strategy 5: Implement differentiated teaching strategies.

Implementing differentiated teaching strategies means adapting your lessons to meet your EL students' individual needs based on their proficiency level. This strategy includes some websites that provide lesson plans and resources for teachers that promote differentiated instruction.

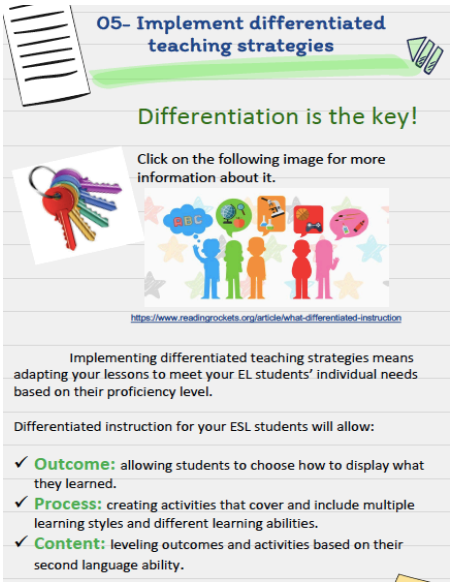


Figure 4.12: Implement differentiated teaching strategies.

Figure 4.13: Websites.

Ellevation is a mission-driven company dedicated to helping English Learners achieve their highest aspirations. Ellevation helps the teachers to serve multilingual learners and empower students with the academic language necessary for success in school. Ellevation is the only EL program management solution that goes beyond compliance and impacts instruction in every classroom. This website offers differentiated instruction with activities and strategies designed for all the ELLs population.

Figure 4.14: Ellevation.

Figure 4.15: Ellevation Strategies.

Strategy 6: Establish routines and maintain clear standards and practices.

ESL students will find everything new, also the routine and structure. ELL students need to understand the purpose or end goal of the activity or lesson to comprehend the lesson's content.

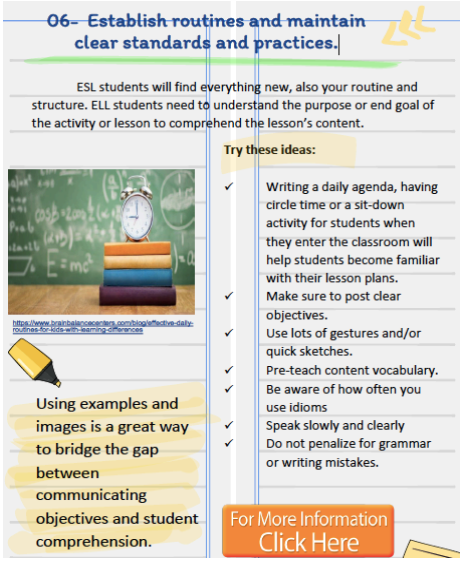


Figure 4.16: Establish routines and maintain clear standards and practices.

Strategy 7: Pair your new student with a buddy and encourage cross culture collaboration.

Pairing ELLs with a buddy who is a patient, kind role model who speaks the same language as your student and can translate will always be a good option. Also, encouraging students to sit next to a student from a different culture rather than forming a cluster of students from the same culture.

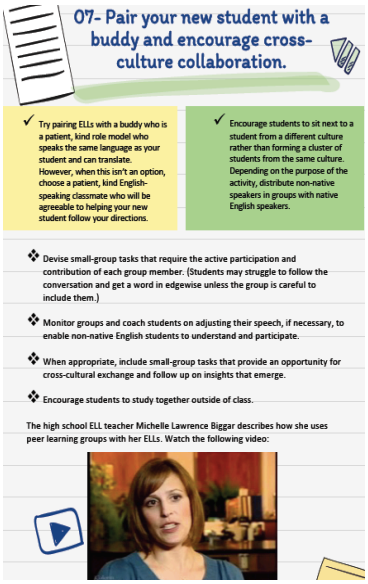
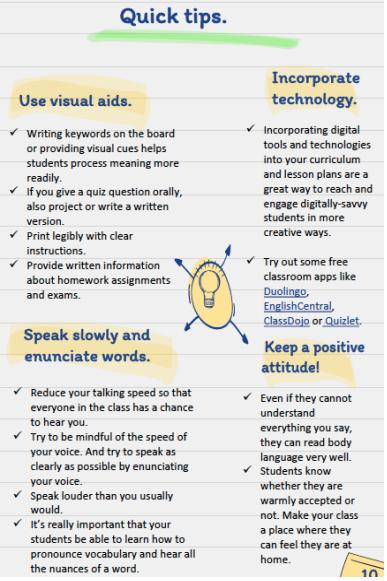


Figure 4.17: Pair your new student with a buddy and encourage cross culture collaboration.

Quick tips.

After the strategies, content teachers will find general tips with useful ideas to be implemented with the ELLs in the daily teaching.



Quick tips.

Use visual aids.

- Writing keywords on the board or providing visual cues helps students process meaning more readily.
- If you give a quiz question orally, also project or write a written version.
- Print legibly with clear instructions.
- Provide written information about homework assignments and exams.

Speak slowly and enunciate words.

- Reduce your talking speed so that everyone in the class has a chance to hear you.
- Try to be mindful of the speed of your voice. And try to speak as clearly as possible by enunciating your voice.
- Speak louder than you usually would.
- It's really important that your students be able to learn how to pronounce vocabulary and hear all the nuances of a word.

Incorporate technology.

- Incorporating digital tools and technologies into your curriculum and lesson plans are a great way to reach and engage digitally-savvy students in more creative ways.
- Try out some free classroom apps like Duolingo, EnglishCentral, ClassDojo or Quizlet.

Keep a positive attitude!

- Even if they cannot understand everything you say, they can read body language very well.
- Students know whether they are warmly accepted or not. Make your class a place where they can feel they are at home.

Figure 4.18: Quick tips.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

I have always considered that English is one vehicle that allows people to know the entire world. In fact, English was one of the main reasons I met my wife. I have traveled abroad, and I have grown every day personally and professionally. In the same way, I love teaching English; I want my students to see English learning as something meaningful, exciting, and rewarding for their lives.

The number of English language learners (ELLs) or limited English proficient students in the United States has grown exponentially over recent decades; these students are generally defined as those who are from non-English speaking families and experience difficulties in understanding English. Consequently, being an ESL teacher in the United States allowed me to assume English learning and teaching in a way I had never seen before. For that reason, I wanted to develop this research project to help and guide ELLs and content area teachers with the struggles they face in the classroom when English and content-area instruction becomes difficult because of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Developing my thesis project allowed me to be in the position that content teachers and ELLs have when in a classroom. As a result, I could understand their concerns, frustrations, and expectations about ELLs' education. While there are still many aspects of educating ELLs that remain contested, such as educational models, native language versus English-only instruction, and several comprehensive sources from the research community have begun to identify, critical knowledge and skills for ELLs still need to be developed applied. Thus, I hope the packet of

strategies and activities provide the content teachers with first-hand strategies that help make English instruction accessible and meaningful for the ELLs population.

However, I consider that applying the strategies and activities I included in my research project would represent just one step in the changes I believe ESL programs and instruction require. The development of this project and the time I have been an ESL teacher in the United States showed me that a stricter and more personalized curriculum for ELLs' needs and language proficiency levels is necessary. Moreover, I would consider that more ESL teachers are needed, especially in primary and elementary schools where ELLs are growing. Also, content area teachers would need more preparation on how to help ELLs from their content classes to maximize their English learning; ESL instruction is to be seen as something inclusive, but sometimes it creates challenges for teachers and students that lead in fears, frustrations, and enlargement of language barriers.

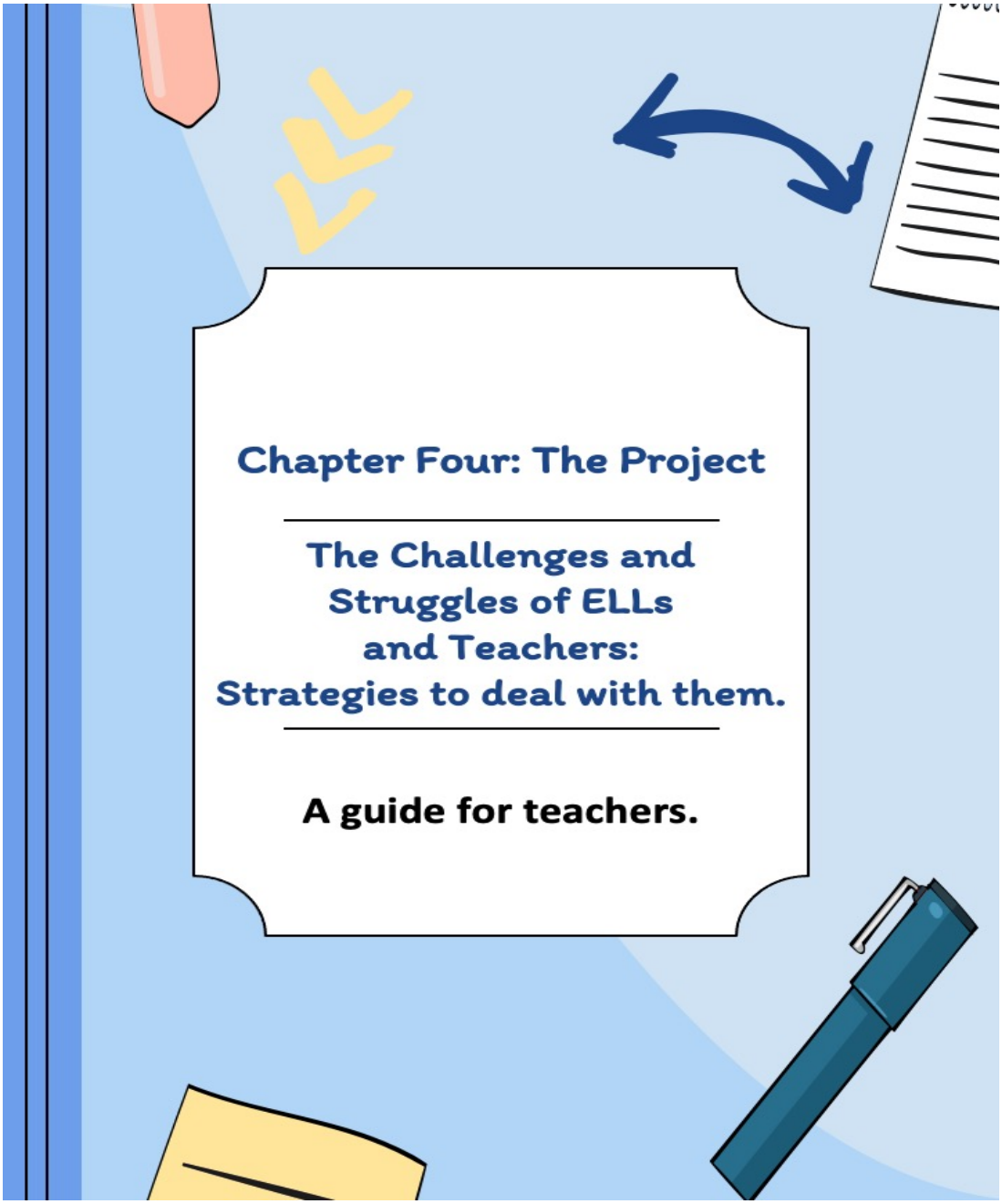
I firmly believe that the rapid increase in the size and the great diversity of the ELLs' population represents a reform in educational policies, curriculum, materials, and management and teacher training to work effectively with ELLs. However, I consider that society and the educational system seem unprepared for these challenges and changes. Consequently, many issues will continue emerging regarding the teaching and learning of ELLs in the United States.

The learning process of ELLs differs from that of students who only speak English because of their cultural and linguistic differences. Nevertheless, I have noticed that schools and the educational system generally do not respond appropriately to those differences as they provide teachers with the same materials for both types of students. A clear example is the standard state tests in which ELLs have to take those tests in English even when their proficiency level would not let them understand most of the readings and instructions. Indeed, instruction

and assessment of ELLs represent a difficult task as there has been too much variation in instruction, assessment, and testing that still seem to be inaccurate. For that reason, I hope the packet of strategies and activities I created in this thesis project gives the content teachers and ELLs a starting point to face their struggles and challenges in the classroom to make English learning and teaching a potentiator to reach the ELLs academic and life goals and to start a change in the ESL programs in support of the whole school community.

Appendix

Appendix A: Slides



Slide # 1

Introduction

According to Samson and Collins (2012), a sea change is occurring in education across the country in the systematic way that we consider what students should be learning and how teachers should be evaluated (p. 1). For that reason, this guide attempts to summarize key findings drawn from the literature on illustrating strategies that all teachers can employ when working with ELLs. Moreover, it also explores foundational knowledge about ELLs that might serve general education teachers that have these students in their classrooms to improve ELLs' educational outcomes.

This guide includes the teacher's specific teaching and attitude elements; the course's specific materials and methods elements, and the student/group's specific motivational and engaging elements. Moreover, this packet of strategies contains the importance of attending to oral language development, supporting academic language, and encouraging teachers' cultural sensitivity to the backgrounds of their students. Samson and Collins (2012) argued that these areas of knowledge be purposefully and explicitly integrated into the preparation, certification, evaluation, and development of all teachers in the interest of improving outcomes for English language learners (p. 2).

Slide # 2

Understanding the Challenges and Struggles of ELL Students and Teachers

ELL students struggle academically for a variety of reasons. They face new changes that bring challenges of learning a new language, the many exceptions in the English language, and differences in regional dialects; they are all overwhelming factors that can frustrate the ELL students. Some of the challenges and struggles that ESL students face can cause:

- Lack of motivation for learning English.
- Over-dependence on teachers or peers to assist them.
- As a result, they may continue to speak more often in their native language or be fearful of participating and speaking out in a classroom setting—all of which negatively affect their overall learning in the classroom.

Moreover, ELL teachers face the challenge of ensuring that each student makes adequate yearly progress in their academic performance while acquiring English, as required by the law. Being able to assess each student accurately can be difficult, as accommodations allowed during testing can sometimes be of limited value.

Another challenge that many teachers struggle with is that there is such a wide range of academic levels among ELL students and preparing lessons and integrating activities that are academically appropriate for a wide range of students.

1

Slide # 3

So how can you more effectively teach your ELL students?

There are several strategies and ideas that teachers can implement your teaching.

https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/idea-vector-24965294

2

Slide # 4

01- Connect with your students.

Let's pretend you're a student sitting in a class with a stranger at the front of the classroom who speaks a foreign language you can hardly understand.

Yes, It can be intimidating when the teacher launches right into their lesson without a warm-up activity, and you do not have an idea what they are talking about.

https://www.bfx.com.au/connect-with-your-students/

Students don't learn from people they aren't comfortable with.

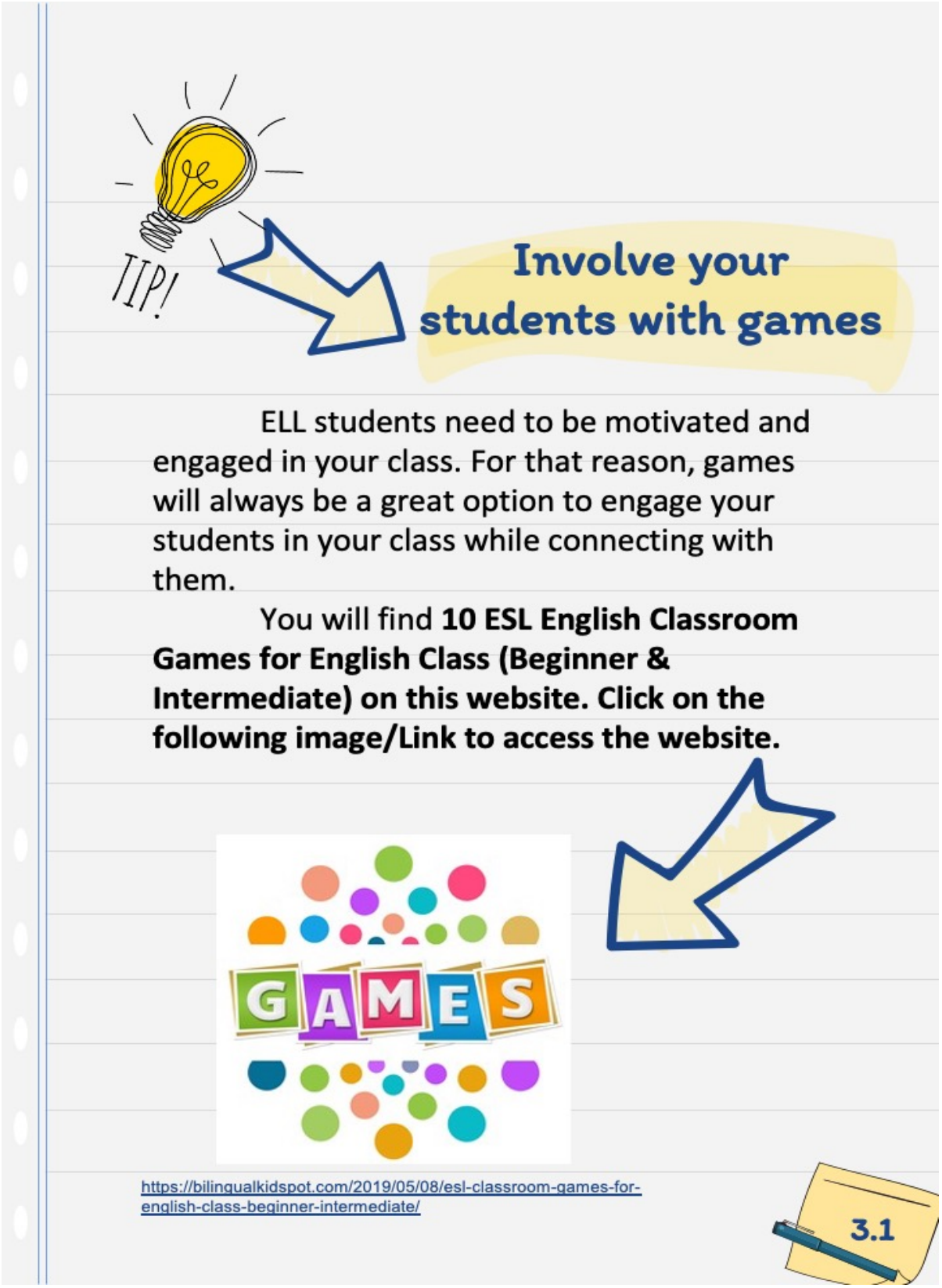
This is what you could do:

- ✓ Introduce yourself.
- ✓ Ask questions or do an icebreaker.
- ✓ Get to know your students before you get started.
- ✓ Learn and address your students by name.
- ✓ Greet each student and make a genuine effort to get to know them.

Creating strong relationships with your students will help them learn better.

3

Slide # 5


TIP!
Involve your students with games
ELL students need to be motivated and engaged in your class. For that reason, games will always be a great option to engage your students in your class while connecting with them.
You will find 10 ESL English Classroom Games for English Class (Beginner & Intermediate) on this website. Click on the following image/Link to access the website.
GAMES
https://bilingualkidspot.com/2019/05/08/esl-classroom-games-for-english-class-beginner-intermediate/
3.1

Slide # 6

02- Allow some time for adjustment.

For more ESL students, it is the first time they have left where they have lived their whole lives. Often, a student has some difficulty at the beginning of the school year but, upon becoming oriented to the class requirements, expectations, and procedures, can fulfill course requirements and academic goals. For that reason, this is what you can do:

- ✓ Become aware that a student may be struggling as a result of English language skills or cultural differences.
- ✓ Meet with the student; ask for an interpreter if needed.
- ✓ Share your concerns, listen to the student's perspective and clarify your expectations for student performance.
- ✓ Let the student know about available resources and classroom modifications.
- ✓ Watch for improvement.

Let them know the advantages of being bilingual.

https://www.vecteezy.com/royalty-free-vector/chart-line-loop-icon-design-vector-22947400

Keep the student's ESL teacher informed.

4

Slide # 7

03- Learn about your students' cultural background.

Currently, more than one out of four of all children in the United States are from immigrant families, and in most cases, these children speak a language other than English at home (Samson & Collins, 2012, p. 4).

- ✓ ESL students need to relate recently acquired English vocabulary to their own real-life experiences to store it in their long-term memory.
- ✓ Make sure to do some research before going to your international teaching destination and familiarize yourself with your students' culture, customs, and everyday lives.
- ✓ Let them see you admire and respect their differences.
- ✓ Use that knowledge in your classroom to help students retain vocabulary and abstract concepts.

If you're looking for successful ways to integrate cultural awareness and help to create a more culturally responsive classroom, check out Teach Away's professional development course for teachers. **Click on the following image/link to access the website.**

teachaway

Culturally responsive teaching: Connecting with students and parents of different cultures

https://www.teachaway.com/courses/culturally-responsive-teaching

5

Slide # 8

Make culture diversity as something fun

https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/Exploring-Cultures-in-Your-Classroom-Activities-to-Try1710.html

Here you will find some activities to develop cultural awareness while having your students engaged and having fun. Moreover, you even can involve their families. **Click on the following image/link to access the website.**

https://www.eschoolnews.com/2018/04/17/culture-impact-ability-learn/

5.1

Slide # 9

04- Create a safe and comfortable learning environment.

ELL students need to feel safe and secure to express themselves fully, to show what they know and who they are. By creating a positive and learning environment, both physically and emotionally, where everyone is accepted and has the same opportunities, students will be more willing to try new things. Moreover, ESL students will be open to practicing their English language skills if they see their classroom as a family willing to help.

This is what you could implement:

- ✓ Positive feedback is essential; correct errors with compassion. ELL students are bound to make mistakes – make their mistakes opportunities to improve!
- ✓ Students are by nature competitive; try positive reinforcement strategies. Reward good work and effort. Positive reinforcement is a
- ✓ great way to make students feel safe and build a rapport.

http://michaellamarr.com/LaMarr/classroomenvironment.html

6

Slide # 10

- ✓ Be patient; it's vital to give students time to finish their work and answer questions. Remember, English is or will be their second language.
- ✓ ELL students will most likely need to translate questions or statements, formulate an answer or reply, and then translate it to English. That whole process can take a bit of time, so it's essential to give students a chance to think it through rather than demanding a quick answer.

This award-winning documentary highlights how the Dearborn, MI public school district is helping its immigrant students succeed. Click on the following video/link to watch the video.

https://dribbble.com/shots/5974631-You-are-welcome-here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wAVhTXf5aQ

6.1

Slide # 11

05- Implement differentiated teaching strategies

Differentiation is the key!

Click on the following image for more information about it.

https://www.readingrockets.org/article/what-differentiated-instruction

Implementing differentiated teaching strategies means adapting your lessons to meet your EL students' individual needs based on their proficiency level.

Differentiated instruction for your ESL students will allow:

- ✓ **Outcome:** allowing students to choose how to display what they learned.
- ✓ **Process:** creating activities that cover and include multiple learning styles and different learning abilities.
- ✓ **Content:** leveling outcomes and activities based on their second language ability.

7

Slide # 12

For more ideas, check out websites that provide lesson plans and resources for teachers that promote differentiated instruction:

education.com

esllibrary.com

sharemylesson.com

scholastic.com

7.1

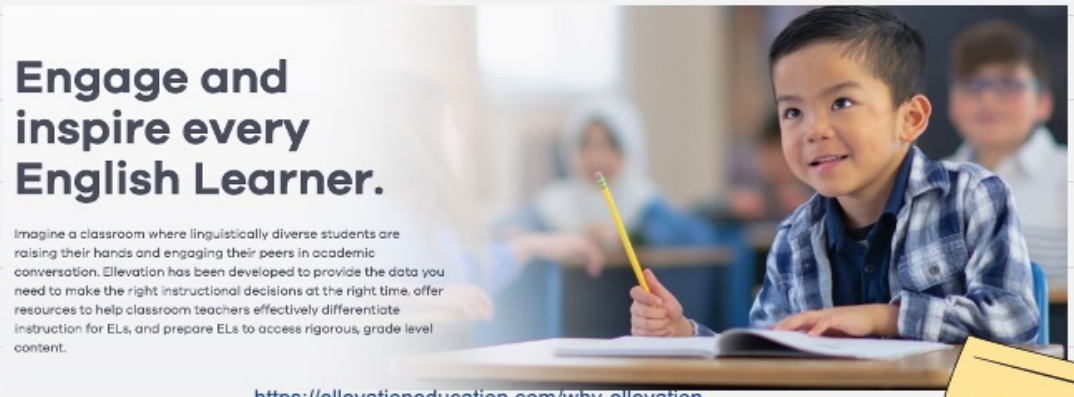
Slide # 13

ELLEVATION

Ellevation is a mission-driven company dedicated to helping English Learners achieve their highest aspirations. Ellevation helps the teachers to serve multilingual learners and empower students with the academic language necessary for success in school. Ellevation is the only EL program management solution that goes beyond compliance and impacts instruction in every classroom. This website offers differentiated instruction with activities and strategies designed for all the ELLs population.

Empower teachers with skill and confidence to effectively differentiate instruction for ELs.

https://ellevationeducation.com/why-ellevation



https://ellevationeducation.com/why-ellevation

7.2

Slide # 14

COLLECTIONS BY CONTENT AREA

- Math
- ELA
- Science
- Social Studies

Browse All Collections

ACTIVITIES BY LANGUAGE PRACTICE

- Build Background >
- Clarify Input >
- Fortify Output >
- Foster Interactions >
- Develop Academic Language >
- Assess Language and Learning >

Ellevation offers content teachers strategies, activities, and collections with different filters in content areas with appropriate academic standards to make English learning accessible to all ELLs.

https://app.ellevationeducation.com/

- Watch the following video to see the introduction to the Ellevation strategies.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x2ltl2XEj8

- In this presentation you will see how some Ellevation strategies are in use with specific features.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/11RkW3J6_06m-2ei-CT45iJKSCN4K7fN2HI8KuL7GPmM/edit?usp=sharing

7.3

Slide # 15

06- Establish routines and maintain clear standards and practices.

ESL students will find everything new, also your routine and structure. ELL students need to understand the purpose or end goal of the activity or lesson to comprehend the lesson's content.

https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/effective-daily-routines-for-kids-with-learning-differences

Using examples and images is a great way to bridge the gap between communicating objectives and student comprehension.

Try these ideas:

- ✓ Writing a daily agenda, having circle time or a sit-down activity for students when they enter the classroom will help students become familiar with their lesson plans.
- ✓ Make sure to post clear objectives.
- ✓ Use lots of gestures and/or quick sketches.
- ✓ Pre-teach content vocabulary.
- ✓ Be aware of how often you use idioms
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly
- ✓ Do not penalize for grammar or writing mistakes.

For More Information Click Here

https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/effective-daily-routines-for-kids-with-learning-differences

8

Slide # 16

07- Pair your new student with a buddy and encourage cross-culture collaboration.

✓ Try pairing ELLs with a buddy who is a patient, kind role model who speaks the same language as your student and can translate. However, when this isn't an option, choose a patient, kind English-speaking classmate who will be agreeable to helping your new student follow your directions.

✓ Encourage students to sit next to a student from a different culture rather than forming a cluster of students from the same culture. Depending on the purpose of the activity, distribute non-native speakers in groups with native English speakers.

- Devise small-group tasks that require the active participation and contribution of each group member. (Students may struggle to follow the conversation and get a word in edgewise unless the group is careful to include them.)
- Monitor groups and coach students on adjusting their speech, if necessary, to enable non-native English students to understand and participate.
- When appropriate, include small-group tasks that provide an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and follow up on insights that emerge.
- Encourage students to study together outside of class.

The high school ELL teacher Michelle Lawrence Biggar describes how she uses peer learning groups with her ELLs. Watch the following video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMlnhKfYPog

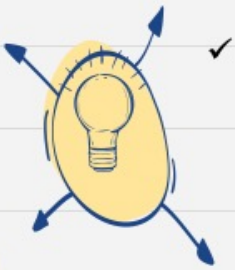
9

Slide # 17

Quick tips.

Use visual aids.

- ✓ Writing keywords on the board or providing visual cues helps students process meaning more readily.
- ✓ If you give a quiz question orally, also project or write a written version.
- ✓ Print legibly with clear instructions.
- ✓ Provide written information about homework assignments and exams.



Speak slowly and enunciate words.

- ✓ Reduce your talking speed so that everyone in the class has a chance to hear you.
- ✓ Try to be mindful of the speed of your voice. And try to speak as clearly as possible by enunciating your voice.
- ✓ Speak louder than you usually would.
- ✓ It's really important that your students be able to learn how to pronounce vocabulary and hear all the nuances of a word.

Incorporate technology.

- ✓ Incorporating digital tools and technologies into your curriculum and lesson plans are a great way to reach and engage digitally-savvy students in more creative ways.
- ✓ Try out some free classroom apps like Duolingo, EnglishCentral, ClassDojo or Quizlet.

Keep a positive attitude!

- ✓ Even if they cannot understand everything you say, they can read body language very well.
- ✓ Students know whether they are warmly accepted or not. Make your class a place where they can feel they are at home.

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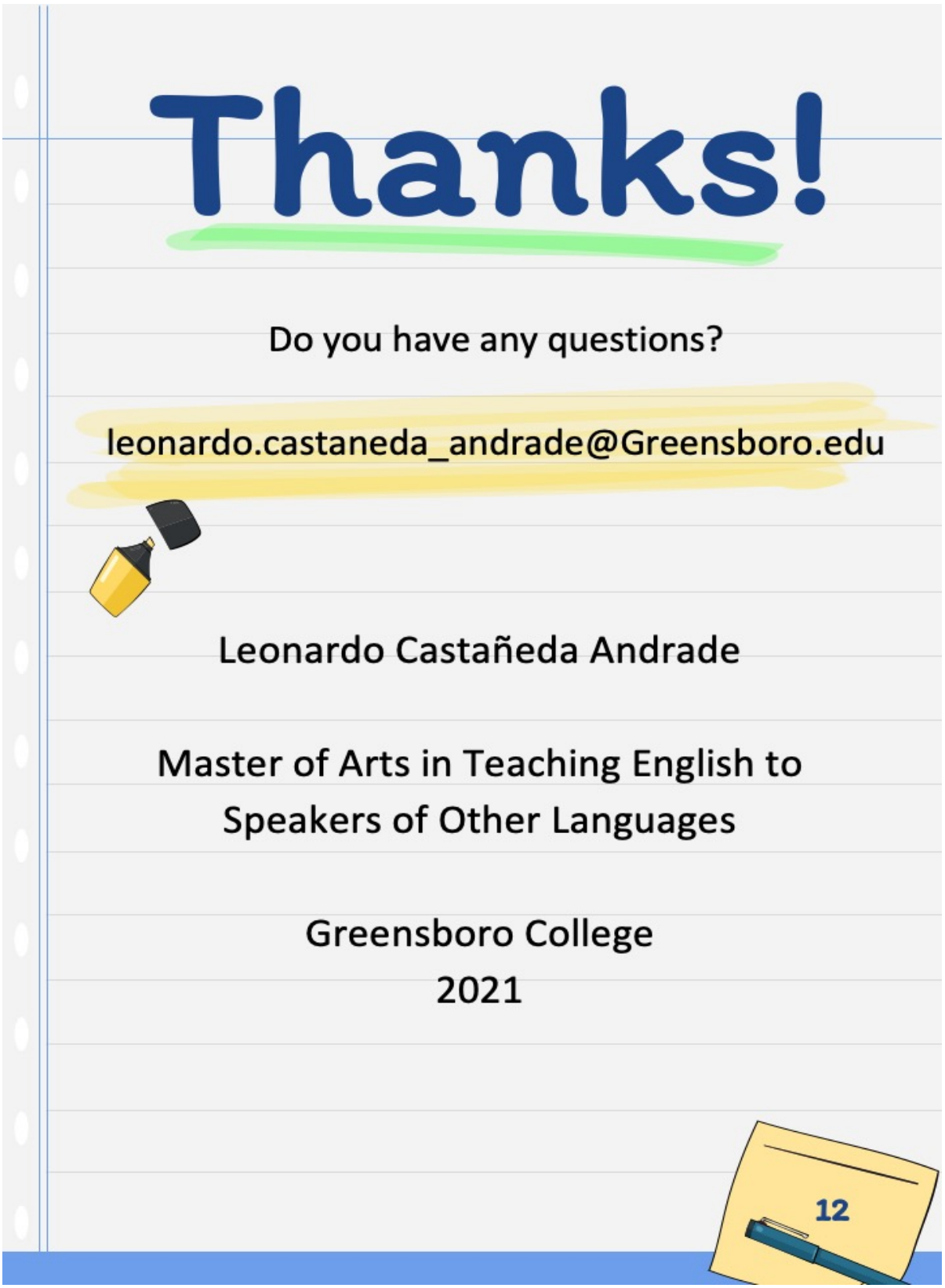
Thanks!
Do you have any questions?
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